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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000341

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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, NSC FOR MARIA GERMANO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION SUPPORTER DETAINED AFTER VISIT TO  
EMBASSY TO RECOUNT PREVIOUS DETENTION

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Joseph Pennington, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) Post's Human Rights Officer learned that police detained early on April 18 an LTP supporter who had visited the Embassy the previous day. He had told us about a previous detention on April 14, in which he alleged being beaten by a deputy police chief and hearing other opposition supporters being tortured for their participation in opposition rallies. We also met April 17 with the father of a 19-year-old man charged with provoking mass disorders during the clashes, a charge the father says is untrue since his son wasn't even there. Both men alleged that police tried to extract false confessions during detention, and both accused neighbors of informing on them to police about their LTP sympathies. END SUMMARY.

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GARAGE MECHANIC PICKED UP AFTER TALKING TO EMBASSY  
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¶2. (C) Far from ending, the anti-opposition police dragnet seems to be widening to include rank-and-file LTP supporters of LTP who are being picked up from their homes or neighborhoods. On April 17, we met with two people referred to us by Heritage Party MP Stepan Sararian -- Armen Voskanian, a garage mechanic, and Kamo Grigorian, the father of jailed 19-year-old Yeghishen Grigorian -- to recount their detention by police following the April 9 inauguration of President Sargsian. (On April 18, we received a frantic call from the wife of the garage mechanic, who told us that police had just taken her husband away for a second time, less than 24 hours after his visit to the Embassy.)

¶3. (C) Voskanian told emboffs of his April 14 detention, during which he had been questioned about his presence at the March 1 demonstrations that eventually turned violent, and for his participation in LTP's post-election rallies on Freedom Square. He said neighbors informed police of his support for LTP, and that a deputy police chief beat him with a chair during his 28 hours in custody. The police accused him of looting shops on March 1, and tried to extract a false confession. While he was in detention, he heard another opposition supporter in the next room being tortured by a police officer. He said he overheard screaming from the room, which prompted a visit by another police officer who

opened the door and yelled at his colleague, "What are you doing? You are going to make trouble for us!" (with the implication being that his fellow policemen risked seriously harming the suspect). When police later reviewed video that showed Voskanian wasn't among the looters they released him, but not without first warning Voskanian to be prepared for a future summons.

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POLICE LURE 19-YEAR-OLD INTO DETENTION  
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14. (C) The father of 19-year-old Yeghishen Grigorian recounted to Emboffs how police had tricked his son into capture by phoning him about a letter Yeghishen's schoolmate had sent to him from his enlisted service in Nagorno-Karabakh. When Grigorian went to pick up the letter, three plainclothes police took him into custody. He is now being held by the National Security Service on charges he provoked mass disorders on March 1-2. His father acknowledged that his son had participated in LTP's post-election rallies on Freedom Square, but denied his son's participation during the clashes, saying he wasn't even present at that time. The elder Grigorian accused neighbors of informing on his son, but defended them, saying "everyone is afraid now, and being persecuted." He also said his son had been duped into signing a false confession during the first 72 hours of his detention, which took place at the same police station to which Armen Voskanian had been taken. The younger Grigorian renounced the confession when he was arraigned at his court hearing.

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COMMENT  
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15. (C) The new leaf we are hoping President Sargsian will turn after his April 9 inauguration has yet to materialize,

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as the continued post-inauguration arrests penetrate ever-deeper into Armenian society. A garage mechanic and a 19-year-old hardly constitute the linchpins to an opposition movement. It is also hard to see how such a formidable allocation of resources in time and personnel for the widening dragnet could take place without the blessing of law enforcement officials at the highest level. What is also troubling is how the crackdown has increasingly pitted Armenians against one another. If authorities continue on this course, it will only aggravate the tensions plaguing Armenian society and increase the likelihood of further unrest.

PENNINGTON